

Conference of Chief Justices Conference of State Court Administrators

PRESIDENT

Randall T. Shepard
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Indiana
304 Indiana State House
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 232-2550
Fax: (317) 233-2990
rshepard@courts.state.in.us

**PRESIDENT**

Jonathan Lippman
Chief Administrative Judge
Office of Court Administration
140 Grand Street, Suite 704
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 997-7980
Fax: (914) 997-7781
jlippman@courts.state.ny.us

April 14, 2006

The Honorable Wally Herger
United States House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building
Independence Avenue and S Capitol Street, SW
Room B-317
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Strengthening Courts Provision in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (S. 1932)

Dear Mr. Herger:

On behalf of the men and women who lead and administer the nation's state courts, we write to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts to include provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) that will assist us to strengthen our courts. We are aware of your prior efforts to address state court needs with the introduction of your Child SAFE Act (HR 4856) in the 108th Congress. We thank you for your continued support and we are particularly appreciative of your efforts individually and as Chair of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources to insure that the following four provisions were included in the DRA.

- Requirement that state child welfare agencies collaborate with the state court leadership in a meaningful way in developing State Plans and Program Improvement Plans;
- Authorization and appropriation of \$10 million for the development of improved case tracking systems for courts for FY 2006 - FY 2010;
- Authorization and appropriation of \$10 million for FY 2006 - FY 2010 to train court personnel, including joint training of court personnel, child welfare agency staff and others involved in protecting and caring for children; and
- Clarification that states have discretion to establish their own policies on public access to court hearings as long as, at a minimum, they ensure the safety and well-being of the child, parents, and families.

Our Conferences worked closely with the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care as it developed recommendations for enhancing the court oversight of abuse and neglect cases. We are attaching a copy of a joint resolution in which we articulated our support for the Commission's recommendations and committed to establishing an action agenda to implement them. (Joint CCJ/COSCA Resolution 04-A-15) Congressional support

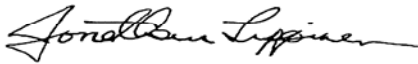
National Center for State Courts
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE
2425 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 350
Arlington, VA 22201
Voice: (703) 841-0200
FAX: (703) 841-0206
Email: govrel@ncsc.dni.us

Conference of Chief Justices Conference of State Court Administrators

is critical if we are to fully implement the Commission's recommendations and achieve our goals for improving the child welfare system so that abused and neglected children can grow up in safe and permanent homes.

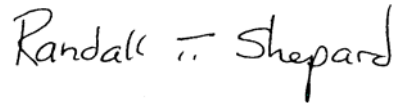
Thank you again for efforts to assist us in strengthening state courts. We look forward to collaborating with you as we implement this important legislation. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact us or Kay Farley at the National Center for State Courts. Ms. Farley can be reached at (703) 841-5601 or kfarley@ncsc.dni.us.

Sincerely,



Hon. Jonathan Lippman, President
Conference of State Court Administrators

Sincerely,



Hon. Randall T. Shepard, President
Conference of Chief Justices

cc: Honorable Ronald M. George, Chief Justice, California Supreme Court
Mr. William C. Vickrey, State Court Administrator

Encl.